



October 2012



A first-year student rings the “First Bell” from the shoulders of a senior student during the First Bell ceremony, Niznechuiyskiy Village, Kyrgyzstan, on Sept. 1, 2012. First Bell is a Russian tradition that takes place each year on Sept. 1st where senior students guide first-year students on their first day of school.

Photo by: Master Sgt. Jason Vaughn

Airmen, Kyrgyz Republic students ring in “First Bell”

The first day of school across the Kyrgyz Republic is a welcome celebration known as “First Bell” and deeply rooted in a Russian tradition that takes place each year on Sept. 1st.

First Bell marks a rite of passage where seniors, in their last year of studies, escort first-year students in a ceremony symbolizing the start of a new school year. The ceremony closes when a senior student hoists a first-year student onto their shoulders and walks about the crowd ringing a bell to signal the first day of school.

Airmen from the Transit Center at Manas traveled to Niznechuiyskiy School 1 to help celebrate the ringing of the First Bell with students and village partners from Niznechuiyskiy Village, Kyrgyzstan, Sept. 1. The Airmen also brought the students new sports equipment

and uniforms to help start the new school year.

“Welcome to your first day of school, students,” said Col. Shir-lene Ostrov, 376th Expeditionary Mission Support Group commander, during her remarks to the students, faculty and staff. “We are honored to be part of your First Bell ceremony and congratulate all the children on such an important day.”

“To the teachers and parents, we have the utmost respect for what you do and the difference you make in these children’s lives,” Ostrov said.

The ceremony included poems recited by the first year and senior students. First graders recited versus from a Russian school poem to let everyone know, “Hello school, we are first graders now!” Seniors shared words of wisdom for the new students -- “Study hard,

make new friends and you will do well.”

“Going to school in the U.S. is totally different, this ceremony really shows how much emphasis is placed on education, from the first year all the way until their last year,” said Master Sgt. Tammy Bean, 376 EMSG administrative assistant. “It was an honor and just awesome to be a part of the First Bell ceremony.”

“To see the children’s faces light up when they saw the sports equipment and uniforms we brought was a rewarding experience,” she said.

During the visit, Village Mayor and 376 EMSG Honorary Commander Ramazon Basarov took the Airmen on a tour of the school and neighboring children’s orphanage.

“The Airmen from the Transit Center have done a lot of good for the schools and orphanages

here,” said Basarov. “It’s been very helpful to our village.”

Partnerships between the Transit Center and the local community are strengthened through programs such as the Honorary Commanders’ program. Civic leaders around the Kyrgyz Republic are paired with commanders from the Transit Center to build partnerships.

“Today, we were invited by Mayor Ramazon to share in the village’s First Bell ceremony,” said Chief Master Sgt. Leonard Thibodeaux, 376 EMSG superintendent. “Being a part of this ceremony today shows the great relations we have with our Honorary Commander.

“Seeing the student’s commitment to learning from first year to their last year goes to show how much they value education to better themselves and helping their country.”

Bishkek Police Academy, TCM Meet for Friendly Soccer Game

Three weeks ago, the concept of a soccer club at the Transit Center at Manas was only an idea. Col. Robert Mallets, Transit Center deputy director, saw the potential of establishing a team for morale and cultural exchange purposes, but was unsure if it was feasible.

After putting out the call for players with the help of the 376th Expeditionary Force Support Squadron marketing team, he was pleased by the number of interested participants as well as the talent level of the prospective Transit Center team. Having coached his daughters, he was eager to form and manage this new squad of eager players. After several rigorous practices, the Liberandos Football Club was born and the club played their inaugural match,

Sept. 8, 2012, against the cadre of the Police Academy at their campus in Bishkek.

In what promises to be the first of many games, the friendly match featured sportsmanship and spirited play that bolstered the

already strong partnership between the two organizations.

The game ended in a 2-2 draw and was watched by several dozen spectators who witnessed skillful play on both sides. The Academy team through some creative passing gained an early 1-0 lead. Liberandos FC answered with a quality spinning finish by Staff Sgt. Kevin Ferguson, 376th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron fire inspector. As the game progressed, both sides gained confidence and an Academy player launched a shot from 30 yards out that sailed just over the fingertips of goalkeeper Airman 1st Class Paul Smith, 376 ECES firefighter.

Down 2-1, the Liberandos FC showed their mettle by pelting the Academy goal. Airman 1st Class Jessie Allison almost converted a quality cross but hit the pipes. Finally the constant pressure paid off as the Liberandos FC broke through to level the score with finish by Staff Sgt. Anthony Simmons, 376th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron. In



Above, Transit Center personnel and Bishkek Police Academy members shake hands after a soccer game at the Bishkek Police Academy. The final score between the Transit Center and the Academy was 2-2.



Photos by SFC Brett Chapman

Inset, Capt. Seth Wilson lines up to pass the ball to a teammate during a friendly soccer match between members of the Transit Center Football Club, the Liberandos, and the Bishkek Police Academy.

the waning moments of the match, the two clubs displayed skilled passing and tenacious defense but neither side conceded a game winning goal.

Mallets felt the game exceeded all expectations and was a significant step in forging a partnership between the two organizations, he said.

"We are very excited to be at the police academy," said Mallets.

"I will be at the Transit Center for a year and look forward to many more of these cultural exchanges. I believe that this event brings both sides closer together. Col. Bazarbaev is a gracious host and I would like to thank him for inviting us here and giving us the opportunity to experience your country and learn about the Kyrgyz culture," he said.

The Police Academy Chief, Col. Almaz Bazarbaev, echoed Mallet's sentiments relative to the game.

"I think this social event brings each other closer, not just as police and military, but as citizens of both countries. I feel that

this event is very positive and highlights the friendship and sportsmanship between the two teams," Barzarbaev said.

"I hope these events will continue in the future and we can continue to develop this spirit of cooperation between the two countries on a larger scale," he said. "I couldn't be prouder of these great Airmen and our Navy brethren," said Mallets.

"From the humble beginnings just a few weeks ago, they have come together as a cohesive team. While on the surface many of the players thought this was just another game in their lives, I am certain that they all know they were part of something bigger and will go back home with the memory of lifetime," he said.

"They were great ambassadors today and have much to be proud of for their efforts. I know they are all excited about what the future brings for the team," he said.

"It is great to see the diversity on our team and they represent a cross section of our nation and embody the saying, 'One Team-One Fight.'

Ribbon Cutting, Dedication Ceremony Highlights Partnership

As pre-school aged children's laughter echoed in the air, representatives from the Transit Center at Manas, U.S. Air Forces Central, U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, U.S. Agency for International Development and the Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Education, together in partnership with the Prigorodnoe Kindergarten teachers and principal, celebrated the school's renovation with a ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony, Sept. 18.

The project, which is valued at more than \$25,000, consisted of: the removal and replacement of 66 exterior windows with double-paned energy efficient windows; removal and replacement of exterior and interior doors; replacement of all linoleum flooring within the first-floor hallway; and the installation of a 100-liter hot water heater.

The renovations were managed by the Transit Center's Theater Security Cooperation division and helped to improve the overall quality of life for the students.

"When we received the official notification the contract had been signed, it was the best



Lt. Gen. David Goldfein, Mr. David McCormick, and Ms. Klara Kerimbekovna cut a ribbon during a dedication ceremony at the Prigorodnoe School in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Sept. 18. The ceremony strengthened the successful partnership of the U.S. Air Forces Central, Transit Center at Manas and the Kyrgyz Republic.

day for us," said Klara Kerimbekovna, Prigorodnoe Kindergarten principal, during the ceremony's opening remarks. "We had [structural] problems with this facility and this assistance helps so much, especially for the children's [quality of life]."

She went on to also thank the volunteers who visit the school on a regular basis, "who continue to build upon the three-year partnership between the

Transit Center and the school." Members of the 22nd Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, who were on hand to help celebrate the completion of the project, volunteer their off-duty time to visit with the children, assist the children with their English language skills, and perform yard work in order to maintain a safe play area for the students as part of a continued effort to strengthen partnerships between the Transit Center and

surrounding communities.

Lt. Gen. David Goldfein, AF-CENT commander, attended the ceremony and was honored to see how projects, such as this one, help to forge and maintain a strong partnership between the U.S. and Kyrgyz Republic. "With the international music of children behind me, I am reminded of how we are more alike than different, especially with regard to our children - we all want the best for our children. This project exemplifies this and I can see, first-hand, the strong partnership between nations - a true partnership for life."

Expounding on the theme of partnership, the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek Acting Deputy Chief of Mission David McCormick said that the project not only will allow the students to study in an improved environment for years to come but has laid the foundation for a continued relationship with the Transit Center, U.S. government and the school.

The ceremony concluded with a short tour of the facility in which guests viewed the improvements and spoke with teachers and students.

Medical Team Build Partnerships, Exchanges Information

Personnel from the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan hosted representatives from the Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Health Sept. 19, here. The visit included briefings by Col. Robert Mallets, 376 Air Expeditionary Wing vice commander and Col. (Dr.) Frank Allara, 376th Expeditionary Medical Group commander, as well as a tour of the Transit Center and medical clinic.

The visit was the latest in a continuing informational and cultural exchange program that familiarizes medical personnel from the Transit Center and their Kyrgyz Republic colleagues with one another's methods, practices and techniques. Health care professionals from the Transit Center frequently visit Kyrgyz Republic medical facilities throughout the Bishkek area.

"We enjoy working in conjunction with

our Kyrgyz Republic partners to improve the health and welfare of the local community," said Allara. "We have stayed busy with the military and cultural exchanges and have established partnerships with village schools as well."

Members of the Ministry of Health enjoyed the visit and recognized the growing relationship with Transit Center personnel.

"Today's event has a positive effect on our strong relationship. The exchange was very open and productive," said Marat Kaliev, Deputy Minister of Health for the Kyrgyz Republic.

"You have a very good team of public health and it is great to learn more about what you do at the Transit Center. We hope that today's visit will further the relationship between the Ministry of Health

and the men and women of the Transit Center," said Kaliev.

Allara is looking forward to exchanges in the near future and excited about the strong partnership that has developed between the medical group and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Health.

"It was evident from today's meeting that the Deputy Minister and I are on our way to developing a productive and successful relationship. As the director of medical services, one of my key goals is to strengthen our association in order to further enhance the bonds between our two great countries. Not only do I look forward to nurturing professional relationships with our Kyrgyz partners, but personal relationships as well," Allara said. "It was indeed an honor and pleasure to have the Deputy Minister as our guest today."

TCM Airmen, Abdraev Music School students celebrate renovations

As violin music filled the air, representatives from the Transit Center at Manas, U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, and the Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Culture and Tourism, celebrated renovations at the Abdraev Music School with a ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony, Oct 1.

The Abdraev Music School has approximately 200 students ranging in age from 7 to 18 years old and attracts elite music students from across the Kyrgyz Republic. Several graduates of the school perform for audiences in Moscow, London and New York.

The project, which is valued at more than \$18,000, entailed replacement of 18 windows; refurbishment of the wooden floors and ceiling in the main assembly hall as well as resurfacing and painting of the floors, ceilings and walls in three additional rooms.

The event featured performances by students from the school as well as songs from the U.S. Air Forces Central band, "Top Flight." Top Flight is deployed from Joint Base San Antonio and completed a 12-day tour of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Kyrgyz Republic Minister of Culture and Tourism Ibragion Junusov spoke about the project and the friendship between Kyrgyzstan and the United States.

"I appreciate the great help provided by representatives of the Transit Center and the U.S. Embassy to accomplish this project. I welcome everybody to enjoy and celebrate this moment. Our students will be taking the first steps into the world of music and culture in this beautiful room," he said.

Col. Corey Martin, Transit Center director, attended the ceremony and was honored to see how projects, such as this one, help to forge and maintain a strong partnership between



Above, Col. Corey Martin, Mr. David McCormick and Mr. Ibrahim Junosov cut a ribbon during a dedication ceremony at the Abdraev Music School, Oct. 1.



Left, Tech. Sgt. Christin Foley and Kyrgyz Republic students sing "Can't Help Falling In love with You," by Elvis Presley to close the ceremony and show.

Photos by Senior Airman Brett Clashman

the U.S. and Kyrgyz Republic.

"It is an honor to represent the Transit Center at today's dedication. It serves as another example of the great partnership between the Kyrgyz Republic and the United States. I am excited that this project expands our relationship to include the Ministry of Culture

and Tourism," Martin said.

"As a place for education and music, the Abdraev Music

"Music breaks down any language barriers and is international."

**- Col. Corey Martin
Transit Center director**

School is well suited for this type of cooperation. Language will always be a barrier for me in this part of the world but music breaks

down any language barriers and is international. I am very happy that the

U.S. Government could be part of these improvements and I look forward to hearing music bounce off the new windows and ceiling," he said.

Top Flight's Drummer Tech. Sgt. Chad Newman was pleased to have the opportunity play at the Abdraev School.

"Kyrgyzstan has been a wonderful experience for us. The people have been very friendly and we have enjoyed performing for them. I believe that they enjoyed listening to us," said Newman.

Industry Day Provides Access to Local Residents

Kyrgyz Republic based businesses were invited to attend Industry Day 2012 at the Ak-Keme Hotel in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Sept. 10. The conference was hosted by Defense Logistics Agency, a U.S. government contracting organization, and intended to familiarize local entrepreneurs with the procedures required to conduct business with the U.S. government.

The conference allowed prospective Kyrgyz Republic contractors and representatives from nine U.S. government agencies to discuss common interests and explore ways to streamline the procurement process.

"We wanted to organize an industry day with our partner contracting agencies and entrepreneurs in the Kyrgyz Republic," said Brig. Gen. Steve Leisenring, U.S. Central Command-Joint Theater Support Contracting Command deputy commanding general. "Establishing a buying cell at the Transit Center at Manas, we can focus on identifying vendors to help businesses procure materials and services, strengthening our economic tie."

Maj. Ryan Goodwin is the Transit Center at Manas contracting chief and felt that the forum was productive.

"The objective is to strengthen the economic partnership between Kyrgyz Republic vendors and the U.S. government agencies. It is important for business people to understand the process and learn how local contractors can do business with the Transit Center. "The purpose of the conference



Maj. Ryan Goodwin speaks to Kyrgyz Republic contractors at the Ak-Keme hotel in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Sept. 10. Goodwin focused on strengthening economic ties for those that want to do business with the Transit Center at Manas.

was to expand regional economic partnerships while ensuring access to and expansion of capacity in support of Operation Enduring Freedom," Goodwin said.

"There is a lot of confusion relative to doing business at the Transit Center and our intent was to make ourselves available to answer any questions. By explaining our need and what it requires to fulfill our mission it gives business an idea of what to expect," said Goodwin.

All interested parties must pass a rigorous screening process.

Strengthening economic ties and learning how local contractors can do business with the Transit Center was Goodwin's intent at the conference.

"We are looking forward to continuing the process in the future and sharing our requirement to the local markets as well as strengthening our friendship with our host nation partners."

Music Breaks Language Barriers in Naryn with Top Flight Show

Airmen from the U.S. Air Forces Central band, "Top Flight" performed for more than 400 Kyrgyz students Sept. 27 during a live concert at the House of Youth, Naryn Province, Kyrgyzstan.

The group's 12-day stop in Kyrgyzstan began with performances on the Transit Center at Manas and was followed with a 4-day trip to the Naryn Province as part of a U.S. Embassy outreach initiative.

Local teens in Naryn were thrilled that an American band traveled to their city to play live music for them.

"In our country we only hear music on the radio like Be-

yoncé or Shikira," said Arbermet Zhrygalbekova, a high school student from Naryn. "Your visit is important to us, we never hear live English music here."

Zhrygalbekova enjoyed listening to the live music. She was able to see the last AFCENT band, "Vector" perform during her vacation to Lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan where they were on a similar outreach program as Top Flight.

"We all like when the band visited Issyk-Kul," she said. "It is great that [Top Flight] now come to Naryn and play for me and my friends, thank you."

Top Flight, who performs a

mix of pop, rock and country, drove the students and teachers to their feet with hits by Michael Jackson and Justin Bieber.

"The band was very good," said Alymudunova Sydyrym who is also resident from Naryn. "The song by Rhianna was my favorite."

Aliman Temirbek, Transit Center media relations specialist, is no stranger to performing with the AFCENT bands who visit Kyrgyzstan. She was invited by Tech. Sgt. Christin Foley and Senior Airman Henry Roberson, Top Flight vocalists to sing a few songs.

"I have performed with other

Air Force bands but I really enjoyed singing with Top Flight, they play all my favorite pop songs," Temirbek said. "For Kyrgyz children to see me singing popular songs in English helps them see how music connects us all."

After the performance, Tech. Sgt. Chad Newman, Top Flight percussionist and a crowd favorite was surrounded by students wanting to play the drums.

"Entertaining the audience was the highlight of this trip," he said. "Having the kids come and play on the drums was a wonderful way to reach the children culturally."

Transit Center Economic Impact as of Sept. 30, 2012

Direct Expenditures	FY09 Actual	FY10 Actual	FY11 Actual	FY12 YTD
Payments to Kyrgyz Govt - Dip Note	\$26,620,000	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000
Payments to Manas International Airport	\$22,999,039			
Lease, Passes, Utilities		\$4,029,091	\$7,817,140	\$4,475,365
Aircraft Landing, Parking, Service Fees		\$21,157,571	\$19,460,590	\$21,301,884
Contributions to Airport Improvements	\$30,600,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,658,294
Contributions to Kyrgyz Aeronavigation	\$0	\$0	\$30,000,000	\$60,505
Contract Payments (Furniture, Sports Equipment, Parts, Supplies, Buildings, Renovations, Road Repairs, Grounds Maintenance, Refuse, Custodial, Vehicle Leases)	\$24,601,908	\$42,790,517	\$30,916,871	\$31,567,612
Leases (non-MIA)	\$81,562	\$66,596	\$120,698	\$115,612
Programmatic Humanitarian Assistance	\$1,700,000	\$2,273,488	\$823,634	\$1,887,684
Subtotal Direct Expenditures	\$106,602,509	\$130,317,263	\$149,138,933	\$140,066,956
Indirect Expenditures				
Estimated U.S. military local spending	\$1,037,530	\$1,161,743	\$1,427,396	\$2,011,226
Subtotal Indirect Expenditures	\$1,037,530	\$1,161,743	\$1,427,396	\$2,011,226
Total Economic Impact	\$107,640,039	\$131,479,006	\$150,566,329	\$142,078,182
DLA Jet Fuel Payments (GAK)				\$208,137,115

Airmen, Kyrgyz Students Establish Friendships at American Corner

Service members from the Transit Center at Manas joined Kyrgyz Republic students for the American Corner at the Bayalinov Children's Library in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Sept. 21. The group meets weekly to discuss various topics chosen by the students.

American Corner is an information resource center designed to provide comprehensive information about the United States while promoting mutual understanding between American and Kyrgyz people. The goal of these discussions is to build partnerships and lasting relationships through cultural exchanges.

Capt. Trevor Warren, Transit Center Theater Security Cooperation social cultural section chief, facilitated the dialogue between the 10 representatives from the Transit Center and



Staff Sgt. Dan Skinner shares a laugh with Kyrgyz Republic students during an American Corner exchange.

approximately 40 students from local high schools and universities. The afternoon's topic focused on charity.

"We had a pretty substantive participation among the students and experienced good interaction from the students

considering that their English language skills are still developing. We discussed charitable concepts first and then broke up into smaller groups. I witnessed friendships form," said Warren.

Tech. Sgt. Carmella Rapadas, Transit Center TSC NCO in

charge of the social cultural branch, found the exchange to be productive.

"The topics are chosen by students and they enjoy the discussion. Some are shy and not comfortable speaking in English but they really open up during the one-on-one conversations," Rapadas said. "We tend to see familiar faces but today there were new participants who were very happy to have Transit Center personnel visit."

Pavel, an 18-year-old student from the International University of Kyrgyzstan, visited American Corner for the first time and enjoyed the event.

"I had fun today and liked the conversation. I learned about charity in the United States. I hope to come here again and learn about life in the United States," he said.